

# **John Piscopo**

## *Biography*

State Representative John E. Piscopo is an established leader within the House Republican caucus and a tireless worker for the towns of Burlington, Harwinton, Litchfield and Thomaston.

Representative Piscopo has served as a House Minority Whip (the third-highest ranking leadership position within the House Republican caucus) since 1997. He was reappointed to the leadership position for the 2005 - 2006 legislative sessions.

As a Minority Whip, Representative Piscopo's duties involve working with other members of the House Republican caucus to ensure they understand and support important GOP legislative initiatives. Before being named Minority Whip, he served as an Assistant Minority Leader from 1993 through 1996.

Representative Piscopo, who has served on the Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Bill Review; Executive and Legislative Nominations; and Environment committees since his 1997-98 term, was reappointed to those committees for the 2005 - 2006 legislative sessions.

Representative Piscopo formerly served on the Appropriations, General Law, and Public Safety committees as well as the select committees on Housing and Children.

Representative Piscopo, working with the governor's office and the Office of Policy and Management, managed to secure several grants that benefited 76<sup>th</sup> District towns during the 2003 and 2004 legislative sessions, including:

- A \$3.25 million grant for the construction of a water main extension at the former Mitral Company Superfund site on the border of Burlington and Harwinton to provide a permanent supply of potable water to about 80 homeowners who had been coping with a serious underground water contamination problem for about 20 years.
- A \$1,000,000 grant for an Economic Development Façade Improvement Program to benefit businesses in several towns in the Litchfield Hills area, including Litchfield and Harwinton. The program provides a financial incentive for improving the exterior appearance of commercial buildings.
- A \$50,000 grant for Regional School District # 10 to pay for a handicapped accessible playscape at the Harwinton consolidated school.
- A \$285,000 grant to help pay for costs relating to environmental remediation for parking lot construction in Litchfield Center, environmental testing for parking adjacent to the Old Bantam Firehouse, and construction of a parking area and site improvements near the Northfield Community Field.

- A \$180,000 grant for a major restoration project at the Thomaston Opera House. The work will include code, acoustical, heating, air conditioning and sound system improvements as well as various interior restoration projects.

In addition, Representative Piscopo helped secure a variety of state grants and loans for the 76<sup>th</sup> District during the 2001 - 2002 legislative sessions. Some of them were:

- A \$123,000 grant for improvements to the Harwinton library and municipal complex, including a sidewalk on Bentley Drive, upgrades to lighting in the area and a new heating system for the library.
- A \$916,800 low-interest loan to Thomaston that helped fund construction of 22 units of senior citizen rental housing. The Thomaston Valley Village complex off Reynolds Bridge Road consists of 12 one-bedroom and 10 two-bedroom apartments available to a wide range of income-eligible seniors.
- A \$10,000 grant to help pay for a beautification project for the Edith L. Kenea Park in Thomaston. The project included landscaping, installation of more decorative lighting and new benches.
- \$7,500,000 in state funding for a superstructure replacement project for a bridge on Route 8 southbound over the Naugatuck River and the B & M Railroad in Litchfield.
- A \$750,000 grant for the cleanup of radioactive radium at the old clock factory in Thomaston and similar properties in three other municipalities.
- A \$165,273 grant to fund upgrades to Thomaston's wastewater treatment plant to reduce the amount of nitrogen in treated water discharged from the facility.
- A \$445,810 grant for a study to determine what had to be done to keep ground and surface water from entering Litchfield's sanitary sewer lines.
- \$1,000,000 in state funding for an Economic Development Façade Improvement Program for the 11-town Litchfield Hills area. The funding was used for a wide variety of improvements, including storefront reconstruction, lighting, sidewalk construction and repair, window repair and replacement, and painting.

During the 2003 and 2004 legislative sessions, Representative Piscopo supported or cosponsored several measures of importance to the 76<sup>th</sup> District and other Litchfield County communities, including:

- Special Act 04-2, which authorized \$10 million for construction, improvements and renovations to regional Fire Training Schools.
- Public Act 04-2, which provides up to \$100,000 to reimburse volunteer fire departments that respond to emergencies on limited access highways.
- P. A. 04-231, which extended the sales tax exemption for purchases of new clean and alternative fuel motor vehicles to July 1, 2008 to continue providing consumers with an incentive to buy hybrid automobiles.

- P. A. 04-115, which enabled the Department of Environmental Protection to put more money into its Conservation Fund and hire additional foresters to better manage, maintain and improve the state forest system. Under the law, new forestry practices are being put in place that will help preserve our state forests and open space areas in their pristine natural state for years to come.
- P. A. 04-169, which made more Connecticut Veterans eligible for admission to the Veterans' Home and Hospital in Rocky Hill. The act also increased the number of veterans eligible for burial in the state veterans' cemetery. It did so by eliminating war service as a criterion for admission or burial, enabling any veteran honorably discharged from active service in the U. S. Armed Forces to qualify.
- P. A. 04-174, which allowed Connecticut residents to obtain health savings accounts. Health savings accounts are tax-exempt personal savings accounts that enable those who open them to save money for future medical expenses.
- P. A. 04-171, which exempted municipal and state agencies from having to transcribe and preserve messages left on telephone answering machines - making it virtually impossible for an over-zealous state Freedom of Information Commission to impose another mandate on state and local government. Preserving thousands of routine voice mail messages would have added major costs to local and state government and led to tax increases.
- P. A. 03-242, which improved the state's effectiveness in identifying criminal offenders and exonerating people wrongly accused of crimes by requiring DNA testing of anyone convicted of a felony, and including their genetic profiles in the state's data bank.
- P. A. 03-236, which strengthened the power of the governor, the Department of Public Health, and local health directors to respond to public health emergencies - including bio-terrorism or epidemics.
- P. A. 03-21, which makes assaulting a pregnant woman and causing her pregnancy to terminate without a live birth a Class A felony punishable by 10 to 25 years in prison, a fine of up to \$25,000 or both.
- P. A. 03-156, which increased the penalties for identity theft, helps restore the credit-worthiness of victims and established safeguards to make it more difficult for criminals to obtain personal identification information.
- P.A. 03-205, which heightened the security of single-family homes by preventing disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act of building plans for such dwellings to unauthorized persons.
- P.A. 03-85, which made veterans who have 90 days of active duty service since August 2, 1990 eligible for state property tax, education and other benefits. Previously, only veterans who had served during specific times of war or operations were eligible for the benefits.
- P. A. 03-78, which gave Connecticut residents the option of choosing Medical Savings Accounts over conventional health insurance plans. Individuals and

families who open MSAs can make annual tax-deductible contributions to their accounts. Interest earnings are tax-free as are funds withdrawn to pay for medical expenses. MSAs can only be opened in conjunction with the purchase of a high-deductible health insurance plan.

- P. A. 03-77, which makes it easier for early retirees to continue their group health insurance from age 62 to 65, until they are eligible for Medicare.

Representative Piscopo also supported several laws important to 76<sup>th</sup> District residents during his 2001-02 term. Among them were:

- P. A. 02-137, which requires that military discharge documents filed by veterans with public agencies to be kept separate from their other records and remain confidential for 75 years. The act also allows municipalities to increase their optional property tax assessment reduction for low-income wartime veterans and their surviving spouses.
- P. A. 02-97, which established terrorism as a crime in Connecticut. It also created the crimes of contaminating a public water or food supply and damaging public transportation property for terrorist purposes. It also defines fabricating weapons involving chemicals, disease organisms or radiation as terrorist crimes.
- P. A. 01-191, which added veterans who served in time of war and received service-connected traumatic brain injuries to the list of individuals eligible to register their vehicles without paying a fee. The act requires the state Department of Motor Vehicles to issue special license plates and identification cards to veterans afflicted with traumatic brain injuries at no charge.

Representative Piscopo also was a co-sponsor of the 1998 Open Space Law, which seeks to preserve 21 percent of Connecticut's land area as open space for the enjoyment of future generations.

Representative Piscopo was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1988. He was re-elected in 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004.

Rep. Piscopo is a 1973 graduate of Thomaston High School.

He received a B.A. Degree in 1977 from Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, majoring in History and Political Science. Rep. Piscopo served as a legislative intern to then-state Sen. Richard C. Bozzuto in 1976. He is a full-time legislator.

He is a former member of UNICO of Watertown. He also has done volunteer work for the Thomaston Opera House. He was an early supporter and volunteer in the organization of Thomaston's recycling program.

Rep. Piscopo is married to Patricia (DeBlois) Piscopo.